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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 001055

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C, LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA-WATCHERS
INFO AF/PD (CANYASO)

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SUBJECT: CHAD'S POLITICAL TALK: DIALOGUE OR MONOLOGUE?

REF: A. NDJAMENA 00994

[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 00989

[1](#)C. PARIS 05106

[1](#)D. NDJAMENA 01026

Classified By: Public Affairs Officer Arthur Bell for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Making good on informal commitments voiced before the May 3rd election, President Deby's government completed a week of "political dialogue" sessions on August [1](#)2. Dubbed by the opposition parties who boycotted the sessions and the independent press as a "monologue," a "masquerade," and "le grand show," the much-anticipated political dialogue appeared long on pomp and short on substance. The results, presented in a "final report" at the closing session, included some potentially beneficial changes to the electoral code. However, results also included vague and potentially menacing proposals for a "code of good conduct" and "better tracking policies" for political parties, and a public funding plan that, on the surface, appears to greatly benefit the party in power. Meanwhile, a visiting high-ranking United Nations official found little reason for optimism, citing "no willingness on the part of the government or the opposition to come together on fundamental issues." END SUMMARY.

THE DIALOGUE

[1](#)2. (SBU) With predictable pomp and solemnity, Prime Minister Pascal Yoadmndaji welcomed over 500 participants, observers, and press to the opening ceremony of Chad's latest iteration of "political dialogue" on July 28. The six-day event, presented as the "Political Dialogue for the Reinforcement of the Democratic Process in Chad," was widely seen as President Deby's answer to the international communities' urging to sit down with his political opponents and address Chad's institutional crises.

RESULTS?

13. (SBU) Post has previously reported on the widespread skepticism about the dialogue (Ref A), owing in large measure to the deep mistrust between the Deby regime and its political opponents. The latter have long been openly critical of Deby's attempts to dialogue, and generally appear to view the latest version as a farce with little to no chance of success (Ref B, Ref C).

14. (SBU) Nonetheless, the GOC forged ahead with the dialogue. President Deby convened a nine member "council of wisemen" (drawn mostly from his inner circle; see Ref A) to advise him on the format and content of the dialogue. The working sessions included 54 political parties, the vast majority allied in some respect with the ruling MPS, and none drawn from the CPDC collective, which includes most of the prominent opposition leaders. During the working sessions, an 11 member working committee, composed of representatives of various political parties including the ruling MPS, produced a total of 13 official statements covering four broad areas: a) the electoral code; b) organization of elections; c) status of political parties; d) code of good behavior for political parties.

15. (U) Below are some of the salient points from each area:

a) Electoral code revisions:

--nomad voting procedures: fewer days to vote; must vote in a chosen district.

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--votes can be cast at any polling place, with valid card.
--changes to overseas voting procedures

b) Organization of elections:

--revise electoral lists
--modify composition of National Electoral Commission (CENI) (1/4 GOC, 1/2 Natl Assembly parties, 1/4 non-Natl Assembly parties).
--reduce number of voters per polling station.

c) Status of political parties:

--revisions to Law 45 governing creation of political parties.
--"better tracking" of political parties.
--Heads of political parties will have some special status (to be defined).
--promote gender and the role of women in political parties.
--provide funding for political parties who present a candidate.
--provide equal access to public media for campaigning parties.

d) Code of good behavior:

--obligations of political parties.
--mechanisms for better tracking of political parties.
--political parties must be national in composition (at least 3 members from every region).

UNITED NATIONS PERSPECTIVE

16. (C) The United Nations sent a delegation, headed by Assistant Secretary General for African Affairs, Tuliamani Kalomoh, to observe the dialogue. In two separate meetings, Kalomoh provided us with his trenchant and fairly bleak analysis of the current political landscape. Kalomoh expressed the UN's desire to see "the emergence of a coherent set of ideas to move past the current political impasse," but instead found "no willingness on the part of the government or the opposition to come together on fundamental issues." During his four-hour meeting with President Deby, Kalomoh

said he encountered a "self-righteous" leader, "not offering any way out," who "took offense at suggestions of 'inclusiveness', thinking that 'inclusiveness' automatically means 'armed rebels.'" Kalomoh reported that Deby re-iterated the GOC's unwillingness and inability to "legalize what is illegal," in reference to the political status of the armed rebellion -- a point also made by the Prime Minister in his opening address at the dialogue. In response to Kalomoh's offer of UN assistance, Deby replied that "the UN needs to deploy troops to Darfur." President Deby also believes that it is the UN's role to bring the political opposition to the table, Kalomoh said.

¶7. (C) Kalomoh described the current attempt at dialogue as "a set of pre-defined parameters and pre-determined outcomes." From the GOC perspective, the primary desired outcomes are to legitimize the President, and to co-opt the opposition to the extent possible, he said. Kalomoh cited four "fundamental issues" that must be addressed. While acknowledging that the "political dialogue" had made a gesture at addressing (1) the electoral codes and (2) the composition of the electoral commission, he pointed out that there was no mention of either (3) judicial reforms or (4) constructive dialogue with the armed opposition.

¶8. (C) The political opposition, and in particular the CPDC, have called repeatedly for an outside, independent facilitator, both to mediate their disputes with the GOC, and to weigh in on Chad-Sudan relations. Kalomoh saw no indication that Deby wants the UN to play this role. Indeed, the UN diplomat believes that the GOC is not ready for true mediation. They want simply "to force through a dialogue,

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and get it out of the way before the inauguration." According to Kalomoh, "the donors must speak with one voice on the need for electoral reform and inclusiveness, and unless the process is open, there is no hope for stability." Furthermore, Kalomoh said that, according to Deby, the GOC continues to view the CPDC as lacking a Chadian constituency. He also said that Deby expressed his belief, during their meeting, that the opposition is supported by foreign embassies, including the American Embassy.

¶9. (C) Kalomoh told us that he planned to report to the Secretary General his conclusion that there was "no direct

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role to play" for the UN in Chad at the moment, "except to identify one or two donors."

MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY REACTION

¶10. (SBU) Private media by and large considered the National Political Dialogue to be a "political monologue," pointing out that the ruling MPS and its close allies were the only participants. This position was also expressed during a press conference by various human rights associations on the opening day of the dialogue. Delphine Kemmeloum, a prominent lawyer and human rights activist, stated in an interview on National Chadian Radio that the political dialogue in its current form "would in no way help to bring peace to Chad." According to the bi-weekly N'Djamena Bi-Hebdo, nothing could be expected of such a forum except a banal discussion of election issues. The daily Progres newspaper, owned by a prominent MPS leader, found that "the dialogue promotes the survival of political parties," citing the new funding proposals, and the new requirements on political parties. Finally, an editorial in the independent Notre Temps said that the decisions taken as a result of the dialogue "will serve only to fill the coffers" of ruling party members, and that participants in the dialogue will be expecting nothing more than "their

portion of the cake that the Prince will distribute."

¶11. (SBU) Although media criticism of the dialogue was quite harsh, the Minister of Communciation told us in a recent meeting (Ref D) that he found it to be acceptable, balanced and well-reasoned, and a good example of the role of the free press in Chad.

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) Now that the "results" of the dialogue are in, it remains to be seen to what extent the government will work to implement its proposed changes, what efforts they will make to continue the dialogue process, and how those who did not participate -- particularly the CPDC opposition and the armed rebels -- will react.

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